A SEMICONDUCTOR MATERIAL AND METHOD FOR ENHANCING SOLUBILITY OF A DOPANT THEREIN

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

(0002)   This application is a continuation of U.S. Application S.N. 10/246.890, filed September 18, 2002, entitled "A Semiconductor Material and Method for Enhancing Solubility of a Dopant Therein" which is a continuation of U.S. Application S.N. 09/945,932, filed September 4, 2001, entitled "A Method For Enhancing The Solubility Of Boron And Indium In Silicon.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

(0003)   The present invention relates to solubility of dopants in semiconductor materials, particularly to enhancing the solubility, and more particularly to a method for enhancing solubility of boron and indium in silicon.

(0004)   Ion implantation allows for exceptional control and reproducibility in the introduction of dopants into the near-surface region of semiconductors. As a result, it has been the universal method of choice for doping MOS transistors in

silicon-based integrated circuits since the beginning of the semiconductor revolution. However, an undesirable effect of ion-implantation is that it introduces significant damage into the silicon wafer in the form of point defects and their clusters, *Fahey et al* Rev. Mod. Phys. 61, 289 (1989). For a device to be operational these defects must be removed and the dopants electrically activated through high-temperature annealing. The annealing procedure leads to unwanted dopant diffusion, as well as nucleation and growth of dopant clusters and precipitates which results in incomplete activation.

(0005)   Experience has shown that the solubility of boron in silicon under non-equilibrium thermodynamic conditions prevailing during the annealing procedure, i.e., in the presence of excess silicon self-interstitial atoms, is lower than its equilibrium thermodynamic value. The latter thus determines an upper bound for the concentration of substitutional B atoms in silicon. As technology continues to evolve toward smaller and faster transistors, this limit may soon be reached unless new ideas and/or technologies are brought forward that can reduce dopant diffusion during processing while at the same time increasing their electrical activity, see *Packan,,* Science 285,2079 (1999).

(0006)   The most widely used p-type dopant, i.e., boron, has a maximum solubility of less than 1 at. % in silicon at the annealing temperature of interest. This sets the limit for the highest concentration of electrically active boron impurities that can be reached with current implantation techniques. Already the next generation of transistors will be dangerously close to this solubility limit.

Another p-type dopant candidate with excellent diffusion properties, i.e., indium, has been used only on a small scale mainly because of its very low solubility in silicon. Thus, there is a need to remedy this acute problem faced by the semiconductor industry.

(0007)   The present invention provides a solution to the above-reference problem by a method for enhancing the solubility of boron and indium in silicon. The invention is based on the use of first-principles density-functional theory (DFT) in the local-density approximation (LDA) to calculate the temperature dependence of the equilibrium solubility of boron and indium in crystalline silicon under various strain conditions. Verification of this invention has shown that the equilibrium thermodynamic solubility of significantly size-mismatched dopants in silicon, such as boron or indium, can be raised by more than 100% if the silicon substrate is strained appropriately.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

(0008)   It is an object of the present invention to increase the solubility of dopants in semiconductor substrate materials.

(0009)   A further object of the invention is to provide a method for enhancing the solubility of dopants in silicon.

(0010)   Another object of the invention is to provide a method for enhancing the solubility of boron and indium in silicon.

Another object of the invention is to utilize strain in a semiconductor substrate to increase solubility of dopants therein.

(0011)   Another object of the invention is to induce tensile strain or compression (bi-axials) strain under elevated temperatures for increasing solubility of dopants in semiconductor materials, such as silicon.

(0012)   Another object of the invention is to enhance the solubility of dopants, such as boron and indium, in silicon by at least 100% using a 1% compression or tensile strain at an elevated temperature.

(0013)   Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description and accompanying drawings. Basically the invention involves increase the solubility of dopants in a semiconductor material. More specifically the invention involves a method for enhancing solubility of boron and indium in silicon. As a result of the method of this invention the solubility of a dopant, such as boron or indium, in a semiconductor material, such as silicon, is increased by over 100%. This is accomplished by imposing a strain of the semiconductor material under an elevated temperature. Thus, this invention greatly advances the state of the art of silicon processing for manufacturing of integrated circuit devices, for example. It has been determined by this invention that the equilibrium thermodynamic solubility of size-mismatched impurities, such as boron and indium in silicon, can be raised significantly if the silicon substrate is strained appropriately. For example, a 1% compression (bi-axial) strain of silicon raises the equilibrium solubility of boron in

silicon by 100% at 1100° C, or 1% tensile strain of silicon at 1100° C enhances the solubility of indium in silicon by 200%.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(0014)   The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated into and form a part of the disclosure, illustrate the method of the invention and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

Figure 1 illustrates a compression strain induced in a silicon substrate.

Figure 2 graphically illustrates the temperature dependence of boron solubility in 1% strained silicon and unstrained silicon.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

(0015)   The present invention involves increasing the solubility of dopants in semiconductor materials, particularly increasing the solubility of boron and indium in silicon. This is basically accomplished by placing a strain on the silicon at elevated temperatures. For example, it has been demonstrated that a 1% compressive strain raises the equilibrium solubility by 100% at 1100° C for boron, and for indium a 1% tensile strain at 1100° C corresponds to an enhancement of solubility by 200%. This method for enhancing the solubility of boron and indium in silicon resulted from the performance of first-principles quantum mechanical calculation relative to the temperature dependence of the equilibrium solubility of two important p-type dopants in silicon, namely boron and indium under various

strain conditions. It was found that the equilibrium thermodynamic solubility of size-mismatched impurities, such as boron and indium in silicon, can be raised significantly if the silicon substrate is strained accordingly. The following partially sets forth theory basis, procedures, and data relative to the present invention.

(0016)   The first-principles density-functional theory (DFT) [Phys. Rev. 136, B864 (1964)] in the local-density approximation (LDA) [Phys. Rev. 140, A1133 (1965)] was used to calculate the temperature dependence of the equilibrium solubility of B and In in crystalline Si under various strain conditions. We show that the equilibrium thermodynamic solubility of size-mismatched dopants in silicon, such as B or In, can be raised significantly if the Si substrate is strained appropriately. For boron, we demonstrate that a 1% compressive strain raises the equilibrium solubility by 100% at 1100° C. For In, an equivalent tensile strain at the same temperature corresponds to an enhancement of the solubility by 200%.

(0017)   The Si-B binary phase diagram shows that at 1200° C, the solid solubility of B in Si is about 1 at. %. Beyond this concentration the excess B atoms can form precipitates of a second phase, i.e., the SiB_3 phase which is stable at 75 at. % B concentration. This phase has a complicated structure based on distorted boron-rich icosohedral clusters, which suggests that SiB_3 precipitates formed in the two phase region of the Si-B phase diagram, are incoherent with the underlying cubic diamond structure of the pure Si crystal. Under these conditions one can derive the following expression for the maximum soluble B concentration in

Si ($[B]_{max}$):

$$[B]_{max} \propto \sqrt{n(T)} \, exp \left(\Delta H \, / \, (2 \, k_B T) - E_{gap} / (4 \, k_B T) \right). \qquad (1)$$

(0018)   Here $n(T)$ is the intrinsic carrier concentration in Si, k_B is the Boltzmann

constant, T is the temperature and E_{gap} is the electronic band-gap in Si. The

enthalpy of solution (ΔH) is further derived to be:

$$\Delta H = 4 \, / \, 3 \left(E(SiB_3) - E(Si) \right) - \left(E(B^-) - E_F - E(Si) \right), \qquad (2)$$

where $E(SiB_3)$ and $E(Si)$ denote the total energies per atom for the SiB_3 and pure Si

phases respectively. Furthermore $E(B^-)$ is the energy of an isolated negatively

charged substitutional B impurity and E_F is the Fermi level which depends on the

temperature as well as the B concentration. Below we present our first-principles

calculations for these quantities and discuss their dependence upon strain.

(0019)   In our calculations the unstrained Si crystal is represented by a cubic

diamond lattice grown along the (001) direction with a lattice constant a_{eq} = 5.39 a.u.,

corresponding to the LDA prediction. A biaxial strain of $x\%$ is applied by changing

the lattice constant of the {001} layers to $a_{\{001\}} = a_{eq}(1 + 0.01x)$ while choosing an

interlayer spacing that minimizes the total energy of the system (Fig. 1).

(0020)   For the unstrained case we obtained an enthalpy of solution ΔH = 0.762

eV. Experimentally, over the range 900° to 1325° C, B solubility shows an

exponential dependence on temperature $exp(-E/k_B T)$, where $E = 0.73 \pm 0.04$ eV. A

similar fit of the theoretically derived temperature dependence yields nearly

perfect agreement, i.e., $E = 0.80$ eV. These results are illustrated Fig. 2.

(0021)   We find that compressive biaxial strain enhances the B solubility by

reducing E_{gap} and increasing ΔH in Eq. 1. More precisely a one percent

compressive strain, i.e., $a_{\{001\}} = 0.99\ a_{eq}$, leads to an increase in ΔH of 0.1 eV and a

decrease in E_{gap} of 0.11 eV. The resulting B solubility is illustrated in Table 1,

where it is compared with the unstrained case. Hence, we find that a 1% biaxial

compression can raise $[B]_{max}$ by more than 100% at 1100° C.

Table 1
(Boron Solubility Calculation)

$$[B] = Ae^{\Delta G/kT} \quad where \quad \Delta G = \Delta H + P\Delta V - T\Delta S$$

$$\Delta H = \frac{4}{3}\left[E(B_3 Si) - E(Si)\right] - \left[E(B^-) - E(Si) - E_F\right]$$

$$\Delta E_F \approx -kT \ln\left(\frac{[B]}{n_i(T)} + \frac{n_i(T)}{[B]}\right)$$

$$[B] \approx \sqrt{A_e{}^{\Delta s/k}\, e^{\Delta H_0/kT}\, e^{P\Delta V/kT}\, n_i(T)}$$

$$n_i \propto T^{3/2}\, e^{-E_g/2kT}$$

(0022)   In practice, it can be problematic to prepare a strained Si wafer for ion-implantation and subsequent annealing. One way is epitaxial growth on a slightly size-mismatched substrate with the same structure, i.e., diamond structure. Silicon wafers are naturally produced with a good amount of carbon contamination in them. However, the extremely low solubility of carbon in silicon results in polycrystalline substrates which renders them useless for this application. Zinc-Sulfite (ZnS) is a material with diamond structure and a lattice constant that is about 0.4% smaller than Si. ZnS wafers can be produced cheaply and silicon thin films grown epitaxially on them, will accept a significantly higher concentration of soluble boron dopants. Strains of the order of 0.4% can be achieved by epitaxial growth of silicon on a ZnS substrate along (001) direction.

(0023)   Using the same approach for In we find that a small expansive strain, i.e., for $a_{\{001\}} > a_{eq}$, will lead to significant enhancement of its solid solubility in Si. In particular we find that a 1% biaxial tensile strain, i.e., $a_{\{001\}} = 1.01\ a_{eq}$, increases ΔH by 0.15 eV and reduces E_{gap} by 0.17eV (cf. Eq.1). These numbers correspond to an increase in In solubility in Si of about 200% at 1100° C. Hence we expect to reach much higher dopant concentrations if we ion-implant the In atoms into a thin layer of Si, grown epitaxially on top of a Si_{80}-Ge_{20} alloy. An even cheaper way would be to use an AlP substrate. This material is in diamond structure with a 0.6% larger lattice constant than silicon.

(0024)   It has thus been shown that the present invention enables enhancing of the solubility of boron and indium in silicon by placing the silicon substrate under strain at an elevated temperature. By placing a silicon substrate at a 1% compressive (bi-axial) strain at 1100° C, equilibrium solubility raises by 100%, and stains of the order of 0.4% can be achieved by epilaxial growth of silicon on a Zinc-Sulfite (ZnS) substrates along the (001) direction. By placing a silicon substrate at a 1% tensile strain at 1100° C, the enhancement of the solubility is 200%, strains of this magnitude can be achieved by epitaxial growth of silicon on a $Si_{80}\text{-}Ge_{20}$ alloy substrate. Smaller strains of the order of 0.6% can be achieved cheaply by growing silicon on a Aluminum Phosphate (AIP) substrate along the (001) direction. This invention has clear application in silicon processing for the manufacture of integrated circuit devices.

(0025)   While particular embodiments of the invention along with particular materials and parameters have been described or illustrated to exemplify and teach the principles of the invention, such are not intended to be limited. Modifications and changes may become apparent to those skilled in the art, and it is intended that the invention be limited only by the scope of the appended claims.